

# MEASURE



Literary Magazine

# MEASURE

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### Art Work

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DeLea Johnson  
Ryan Wright

Bird Sanctuary  
Rachel Barlage

Walking side by side  
down a worn dirt path  
hidden by saturated  
yellow leaves.

Stopping randomly  
to pluck striking leaves  
from branches.  
Unzipping backpack  
pockets  
and slipping them in.

Following as she walks  
to her favorite places,  
her muffled footsteps  
guide me to  
her rock,  
her sacred place  
where she comes to write.

The rock sits on a hill  
overlooking a dried-up pond.  
I lie down on the cold, damp ground  
legs just over the rock,  
just like she showed me.

I stare at the  
slender trees,  
stretching slowly to the sky.  
A canopy of  
orange brown yellow  
leaves  
hiding the sharp blueness  
somewhere above.

Sunshine spills through  
the leaves  
and lands in hazy patches  
on the ground.

The woods enclose us  
in their protective  
embrace.

Here we are  
untouchable,  
invincible,  
safe.

Deeper in the woods,  
further from our own realities,  
far away from our  
daily existence,  
we pass trees  
scarred with the initials  
and insignias  
of a lost generation.

They came to ride horses,  
to smoke forbidden cigarettes,  
to kiss,  
to escape.

At a fallen tree  
lying across the path  
we poke  
with curious fingertips  
at the rough, hard  
mushrooms  
growing from its sides.

She pushes one off  
with a long pointed stick,  
and we study its roots  
in silent fascination.

As we travel deeper into  
the trees,  
walking on the overgrown path,  
we stop collecting leaves and branches.  
We no longer point at  
brightly colored birds  
or see the sunlight on the forest floor.  
We walk in silence.

#### A Few Haiku

*Greg Potts*

Wind blows through the woods  
An Axe head falls sharp  
Startled Deer look up

A fox slithers silently  
like a snake through tall grass  
the geese take to the sky

The morning sun climbs high  
while restless children play  
and parents go to market

## Wind

*Virginia Evans*

You are like the wind; powerful and unpredictable.  
At times I float along and through you.  
Then there are those times when you rage uncontrollably,  
    not permitting me to enter,  
only letting me feel your force from afar.  
Why can't you be like the rain, constant and steady?  
Why must I always be a bird floating along hoping to catch  
    the right draft?

## Beside the Point

*Danielle Adams*

There's a hole in her coat pocket.  
A hand-me-down straight from her sister,  
Lou.  
She wore it until she was told  
Lou  
grew out of her coat again.  
pants, clothes, gloves, shoes...  
all worn by  
Her.  
She wanted a hole of her own.

Lisa

*Robert C. Pfaff*

Well, my love.  
Time has relentlessly marched on.  
Hasn't it?

Think back.  
We were so young.  
We've gotten older.  
Haven't we?

We've loved and honored our spouses.  
We've loved and honored each other.  
We've seen our children grow  
from the early days,  
when we were sure we were too young to raise them right  
to now, when they threaten to leave us forever.

We've watched friends come and go.  
We've watched family come and go.  
We've laughed. We've cried.  
We've cheered, We've scolded.  
We've been arrogant. We've been scared to death.

We've played the game, and well, I think.

So what do we have to show for it?  
Wrinkles, gray hairs, a drooping waist.  
Wisdom, insight, a sense of purpose.

What do we have to show for it?  
Memories, my Love, and maybe that's  
what the whole game is about.

Whoever has the most memories, wins.

Transcendentalist

*Rachel Barlage*

Eyes wide open  
to the world.  
"Slow down,"  
her silent and  
constant  
demand.

Floating across an  
open field,  
Seeing  
the smallest details  
Feeling  
the slightest breeze,  
Sensing  
the subtlest change.

Nature  
surrounding her.  
It is inside of her.

Long, peeling branches  
hung from the ceiling  
to dry her clothes.

A painted rock  
used to hold her door  
open  
declares  
"War is unhealthy  
for children  
and other living things."

Dried leaves  
and flowers,  
Long weeds  
and plants,  
Hard acorns  
and buckeyes  
adorn her room.

Never without her backpack,  
an acorn hanging from the string,  
for collecting tiny pieces  
of the soul  
of God.

Each leaf,  
each tear-shaped seed  
a part of something bigger.

She wants to share her  
happiness  
with a friend,  
bringing him to the  
starlit lake  
to sit in silent appreciation,  
to speak of life  
in reverent whispers.

But he will not come.  
He cannot understand  
the longings that she feels.  
No one can know her,  
but still she sits  
quietly,  
patiently,  
alone.

## Marty (Nearly) Vanquishes the Nefarious Lizard

*Heather Moser*

He was the noblest of the crickets, this fierce warrior. He was barbaric; he knew how to enter a fray and emerge victorious. That was always the imperative: emerging victorious.

And don't think the female crickets didn't notice.

Yes, Marty was a terrifying vision of glory, intimidating death to anyone foolhardy enough to anger him — this heroic cricket's very name meant shame and dishonor to those who crossed him. Even the grasshoppers trembled as he passed.

In addition, he stood an impressive 1 1/4 inches high. He was truly The Cricket among Crickets.

So it was fitting that only he dared try to slay the nefarious Phoenix - the dread lizard who inhaled crickets as if they were mere entrees. Phoenix was indeed villainous - all imposing nine inches of her - and so far her reign of terror was wreaking havoc near and far. "She must be stopped!" was the unanimous cry.

Off ventured Marty, sword in hand. He had never faced such a formidable foe, so of course he was quickly formulating a plan. This was no mere adversary; this was the treacherous Phoenix. This Godzilla of a lizard would not be easy to stop. He soon decided that his best strategy would be to try to stealthily creep up her tail until he was on her head so he could attack from there.

All of the cricket community stood in awe as he stole up her tail. They were worried, and with good cause: Phoenix appeared to be sleeping, but she was not above setting traps for adventurous crickets. They only hoped that her slumber was genuine.

He was almost there. The women and children crickets observed with a mixture of fear and admiration for Marty. He made many allies and friends that day as a result of his bravery for the good of the cricket community. The crowd gasped audibly as Marty raised his sword and poked Phoenix in the nose, awakening her. They all thanked the gods that they had someone as gallant and intrepid as Marty to come to their rescue.

Phoenix ran, startled, a split second after being viciously jabbed in the nose. Her tough skin protected her from damage, but it was not a pleasant way to wake up. Marty held on for dear life as she skittered around frantically. Eventually the atrocity of a lizard calmed down and Marty was able to initiate part two of his plan: going for the vital organs in her stomach.

The crickets watching were amazed as they looked at the sheer size of the enemy Marty was facing. She was immense. Her huge claws curled around her toes menacingly; one look of her beady eyes was enough to send shivers down the spine of almost any creature; and worst of all, her incredible speed gave her an advantage over anything smaller than she. The sheer power of Phoenix had many children unconsciously reaching for their mothers' hands.

Yet on battled Marty. He was far too brave to be worried about inconsequential trivialities such as the futility of his quest. Now he was valiantly trying to get in a good blow to secure his victory. Suddenly he realized that Phoenix was looking at him hungrily. He glanced at his watch for a split second. Yes, it was past her feeding time. Marty tried to evaluate the situation and his rationale told him one thing and one thing only: A digested hero is not a good hero. Marty quickly did the socially responsible thing to do and fled. He could always return after Phoenix had eaten.

And return he shall.



My Grandparents' Land--Killaloe, County Claire, Ireland

*John D. Groppe*

Too little space between river and hills  
to bury all born here,  
too little hope here  
despite tales of royal glory and the rich river,  
so they left to be buried  
far from stone slab huts of hermit monks  
and defiant towers of warrior architects,  
far from sheepfolds and salmon runs,  
and carried with them names from their past  
to endow their children  
and their children's children  
with a kindly courage.

(end)

## Bowling Night

*Rachel Barlage*

He picks up the babysitter  
on the way home from  
the office.

Has time to kill  
before he and his wife  
meet the other couples  
for drinks.

Turns on the T.V.,  
pushes the small, firm  
buttons  
on the remote control.  
Images appear and disappear.  
Melt into each other.  
This form of entertainment  
little more than an  
exercise of power.

They always had drinks  
before they bowled.  
It seemed that everyone  
had more fun  
after a few beers.

They were louder.  
They laughed more.  
All smiles,  
even when losing.

It didn't really matter  
anymore  
who won or lost.

Just another routine.  
The same as driving to work  
each morning.

They would almost rather  
stay home.  
But that would be  
an admission of something.

They didn't want to admit  
anything.

After they bowled,  
they would drink some more.  
Go home  
to their small, white house  
in the suburbs,  
pay the babysitter,  
discuss weekend plans,  
make love.

Fall asleep  
with their backs to each other,  
listening to the neighbor's dog  
bark savagely  
at the leaves blowing in the  
cold, wet air.

### Lost Years

*Danielle Adams*

The wide-eyed cloud gazer  
sees beyond the range of sight.  
Captured by her own reflection,  
gazing at her closest friend.  
Swinging was flying,  
The ant a miracle,  
Puddles her happy hour.  
The invented babble,  
her meaningful expression.

A child,  
innocence at its purest.

### Kid Brothers

To my brother, Bradley Bultman  
*JaLeen Deardurff*

Kid brothers can be such a pain in the rear.  
Mine was no different, he was a real drear!  
Whenever I wanted to be by myself  
he was there bothering me, like a pesky wee elf.

I once had a dollhouse with furniture and such.  
Brother sat down, and I heard a loud CRUNCH!  
Pieces of plastic scattered about.  
I cried out in anger, then booted him out.

"Puff the Magic Dragon" was my favorite song.  
Brother broke the record, and my heart with it along.  
I tried keeping my things out of his way,  
but somehow he managed to find them anyway.

I had baby dolls that could potty and cry.  
Brother had a train set, to which he'd tie.  
I had a bicycle with streamers so new.  
He had pliers, a hammer, and then a pile of screws.

I had a driver's license, my freedom had come.  
Then brother informed me, he wanted to go along.  
I tried to protest, but Mother thought it was good.  
"Be together," she said. "Enjoy your childhood!"

I thought I was cool as I drove through town,  
but Brother was there, making me frown.  
He made faces at people, to which I berated.  
I didn't want anyone to know we were related.

When high school was over, I went out on my own  
without my kid brother, and suddenly I felt alone.  
I called him and asked how he was doing.  
He said okay, but life was pretty boring.

When I got married, my brother was there,  
complete with mischievous grin, and long wavy hair.  
To my surprise, he kissed me on the cheek,  
wished me well, and walked away meek.

My brother was married later that year,  
and I pitied his wife, because she was such a dear.  
He still liked to pull off a practical joke.  
Inside this man, was the boy I wished to choke.

As the years went by we finally became friends.  
My brother and I often laugh at our past sins.  
It's a wonder we survived, my brother and I,  
what with his antics, and my suspicious eye.

We grew into adults, I moved north, he moved south.  
I miss my brother, even his big mouth.  
Now I look back at life with him as fun,  
and the best part is, he now has two sons!

Piano Lessons

*Rachel Barlage*

The door was locked, but the child reached  
into her shirt, two sizes too small,  
and pulled out a cold, metal key  
on a frayed piece of yarn  
tied loosely around her neck.

The sound of metal against metal,  
a quick turn and a sharp click  
opened the front door.

She retreated inside and pulled  
the door closed behind her.

In the screaming silence of the house  
she slapped her hands over her ears  
and began to hum loudly to the room,  
dropping a heavy bag filled with  
science books and an uneaten lunch.

Walking past the glare of a large  
mirror in the hallway, her eyes on the hardwood floor  
and her muddy shoes, her fingers reached down  
from her covered ears to the peach peel softness  
of the slightly raised brown spots  
on her forehead, her cheeks, her chin.

Her trembling fingers slid down her neck,  
feeling the birthmarks as if for the first time.  
Then they moved back up: neck, chin, cheeks, forehead,  
until she jerked her hands away in horror.

At the foot of the stairs, she looked up  
to a green plant, leaves reaching  
through the railing high above.  
She took a step, fingers clutching the guardrail,  
and then another, and one more.  
Her breathing heavy, heart beating faster, faster  
as she ran up the stairs.

At the top, feeling the plush carpet beneath her shoes,  
turning her head past the plant stand and  
into the room at the end of the hall,  
she allowed a thin-lipped smile  
to touch her womb-scarred face.

Not taking her eyes off of the piano that  
sat in the middle of the room,  
she walked down the hallway and  
into her room, closed the door, and  
lodged a chair under the tarnished knob.

She reached her arms in front of her,  
walked like Frankenstein to the piano  
eyes closed. Her fingers touched  
the worn wood of her upright.  
Felt their way to the keyboard,  
to the smooth, cool keys,  
the groups of thin, raised ones,  
the cracks between the lower, wide ones.  
Black and white. Silky. Hers.

She opened her eyes and sat on the bench,  
melodies chasing each other through  
her slowly lightening head.  
Bach, Mendelssohn, Beethoven....  
She sat still for a moment, warm  
sunshine dancing through a small window  
high on the wall, warming her hands  
as they rested on the familiar keys.

## Soulmates

*Robert C. Pfaff*

I look at you  
and realize I have looked at you before.

I listen to you  
and realize I have listened to you before.

I speak to you  
and realize I have spoken to you before.

I touch you  
and realize I have touched you before.

I taste you  
and realize I have tasted you before.

I know you  
and realize I have known you before.

I love you  
and realize I have loved you before.

I gaze into your eyes  
and I see your soul  
as it is now,  
as it has always been,  
as it will always be.

This cannot be our first lifetime together  
nor can it be our last.

We are soulmates  
and this is our destiny and our blessing.

## Dry Water

*Martin Bakowski*

Bourbon is a wicked brew;  
7-UP no doubt adds to its pleasure.  
I take a long, thoughtless drag  
From my cigarette - nicotine  
Quickens the pulse, you know.

Sis, you try and figure me out  
(With little success)-  
Typical of a psychology major.  
I guess I'll let you worry about me.  
I really can't think or walk or see straight.

So what if I lost the receipt for it.  
If it's broken, it's probably for the better.  
I don't really think that way;  
Keep you from theorizing correctly.  
It makes my game more fun, you know.

I like it the way we do things.  
It's easier to sleep and it  
Keeps me on my toes.  
And so my charity continually grows;  
I think you're the only one to see me cry.

Sis, you have the upper hand on me there;  
I probably broke down - it won't happen again.  
As I sit here and think, my veins  
Flowing and pulsating evilly, my heart is still  
Swollen with something I can never have.

## Circles

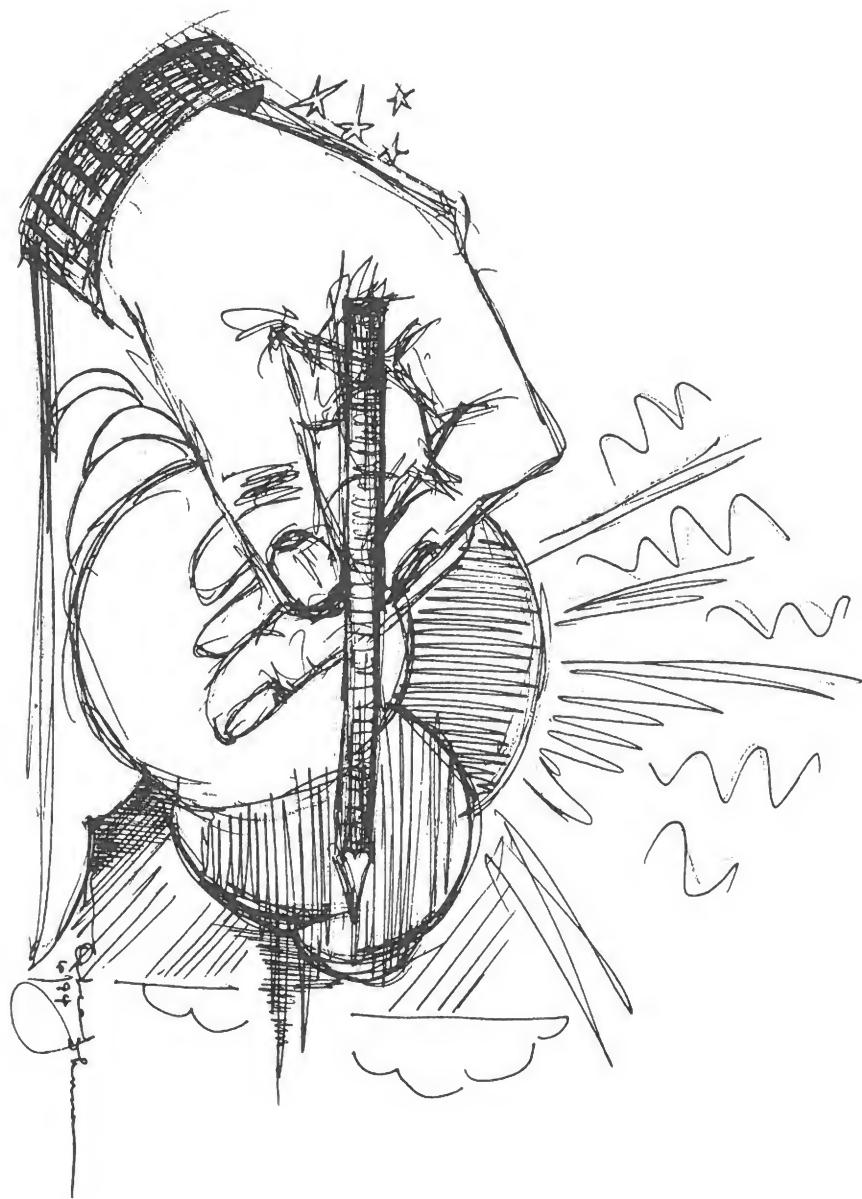
*Jason Grzegorek*

The circular clock clings to the wall;  
measuring pasts, presents, and futures.  
It continues to move in a spiral pattern,  
as do you.

The children sit in a circuit;  
doodling in peripheries.  
Their thoughts swirl in a vortex,  
as do you.

The water in the fountain drains like a coil;  
curving, circumscribing into its conduit.  
The liquid aimlessly goes into nothing,  
as do you.

You talk and lecture in a trance;  
somnambulently, fearfully.  
Can't you see how you entrap us,  
like the circle.



"No Knock" Warrant

*Danielle Adams*

The door ripped open.  
Combat fatigues,  
Commotion!  
Confusion!  
Catastrophe hits!  
A heart beat in the corner  
J U M P S,  
Their line of protection crossed.

The victimized innocent,  
dead.

"Sorry, wrong apartment."

(Society gone mad.)

The Future Life

*Becky Johnson*

I see the darkness of waving hands;  
They guide me through the open holes of  
unsanctified lands.  
As we tour the palace of the dead;  
I can't help but think, is this all in my head.  
I find myself on a cliff, looking up and down;  
Realizing I'm being watched from all around.  
Now it's time to mimic my destiny,  
But this choice has already been made for me.  
As I say some prayers and feel some stares;  
I'm being lifted into the light, from God,  
and all his might.

The Loss of Self

*Virginia Evens*

The soft and wet cotton tips of the waves crash  
continuously against the rusted shell of  
my being.

I can no more control the rushing of the waves than I can control the slow  
dilapidation of my shell.

The harsh salts burn me.

The hungry creatures within it cling to me, sucking holes.

The brown ragged and rusted piece of my shell fall into  
the hungry sea and it eats ravenously,

Slamming against me as it feasts.

And I wait within this slowly rusting, rotting shell,  
For utter consumption.

## The Beach

*Kevin M. Ray*

As I listen to the ocean's roar,  
And watch the seagulls as they soar,  
a feeling of peace comes over me,  
as if I were a wave upon the sea.

My life at times can go astray,  
as life's stresses eat my heart away.  
But like these gulls above the sea,  
the ocean calls out to me.

And as I walk along its sands,  
and feel its waves wash into my hands,  
I feel myself being washed away,  
from the problems of the previous day.

## Prince Charming

*Amy Ceader*

He is a little snip of a man,  
barely five feet tall.

A little pot belly looming over his belt.  
The hair on his head has fallen out a long time ago.  
But hair now grows out of his ears.

He has a nails-across-the chalkboard voice.  
His eyes peer out from behind coke-bottle glasses.

He has ice cold feet  
which he leans against her at night.

Who would ever have thought that after all  
these years he'd still be Prince Charming?

## Memory

*S. H.*

The memory of my last visit with you wraps  
around me like a well-loved flannel shirt.

I cherish your warmth and the knowledge of you near me.  
The softness against my skin rejuvenates me.

The peace I feel lulls me away from my fear and back  
into your presence.

I can now go out and face the world again,  
with you surrounding me.

## Volunteering at Children's Hospital

*Rachel Barlage*

Glue tight under my nails  
Thick and wet on my  
Fingertips  
As they press into greasy newspaper.  
He touches my hand,  
Curiously.  
I dip his tiny fingers into white glue  
Guide them over the  
Cool plastic of the mold.

Encased in my palm,  
His now-bruised hand  
Feels soft.  
He adds ragged strips of  
Newspapers  
To the face of the mask  
With his free hand.  
As he moves his arm,  
Clear I.V. tubes roll up and down  
In shallow waves.

His eyes are startling blue.  
Bright buttons on the familiar contour  
Of his face.  
I study his fragile figure  
Through the thick odor of  
Cleaning fluids and illness.  
His swollen hand shakes  
Violently  
As I lift his fingers off the mask,  
Bring them slowly to my lips,  
and kiss them.

The taste of glue  
Spreading Elmer's on my palm  
Reminds me of third grade  
So I could pull it off in thin strips  
When it dried clear and shiny.  
He pulls my steady hand back to the table  
Presses it firmly into the newspaper,  
Fingers locked in a  
Sticky embrace.

A million machines beep  
Through the patient silence,  
Drain the room of any cheerfulness  
Despite the bright trains and paper dolls  
Painted on the pale yellow walls.  
We are ready to paint the mask,  
But he doesn't want  
Blue, red, yellow.  
We will make purple.

### The Unborn Lamentation

*Virginia Evans*

I'm nothing I don't exist.  
I'm not here writing this.  
I can't feel, I can't cry.  
I'm just nothing, tell me why.  
I want to be like you.  
I want to be alive.  
But I can't,  
Cause I'm dead inside.

## Spoonerisms

*Heather Moser*

Hello, I am a tablespoon. I am just like every other spoon in the Saint Joseph's cafeteria, just a clone of my 500 brothers and sisters. This story will probably be bland because spoons such as me never really get the opportunity to develop a personality like knives do. They get all the breaks. Butcher knives, paring knives, serrated bread knives... now they know their place in life. But a spoon is all-purpose. But I don't want to bother you with my inconsequential problems. I will just tell you about my day and then let you go talk to someone much more interesting, like a glamorous salad fork.

My name is Delco. Actually it is Delco Stainless Steel Japan, but you can call me Delco for short. We spoons all have the same name. It understandably leads to identity crises. But enough about that.

My morning starts early. I get thrown into a metallic cylinder with about fifty other spoons, and we are thrust onto the counter without a care for our well-being. It is dark in the cylinder, and often clammy because not every spoon gets dried off. A lot of the time I am squashed to the bottom of the heap because the others are so pushy, so eager to be chosen by the zombie-like throngs of college students with eight o'clock classes.

Let's assume that I am actually selected by a near-comatose freshman. I am unceremoniously thrown onto a warm red tray that is frequently still damp. The student stumbles on, occasionally running into things as though he's a bumper car. He manages to grasp a cereal bowl and seems to grin, congratulating himself for the accomplishment. Presuming he is now awake enough to work the cereal containers (running into all of those walls is bound to wake him up!), I wait patiently while he fills his bowl with Cocoa Krispies. I emit nary a complaint whilst drowning in milk that has been poured virtually everywhere but in the cereal bowl. He finally picks me up and plunges me into the still basically dry cereal. I am lifted into his mouth and—

OH YUCK! DOESN'T THIS GUY EVER BRUSH HIS TEETH????

I can still see the flecks of broccoli soup from yesterday's lunch! And apparently he has been eating without me because I can smell pepperoni pizza that I had no part in. And - no, it couldn't be - it is! Popcorn hulls from last Wednesday! It's too much, I can't go on....

I can tell it's going to be a long day.

The day gets better from there. (It has to, doesn't it?) I eventually end up thrown into a dishwasher that burns my skin, but is hopefully hot enough to rid me of that awful gingivitis stench. Then it starts all over.

There you have it. My view of the world. It's full of loud, hungry adolescents; full of hot food and bowls of cereal to drown in; full of repetitiveness and neverending ennui. But I guess I don't really deserve better. After all, I am just Delco Stainless Steel Japan, and I am just like every other spoon you'll ever meet, except I have almost no hope for the future. Oh, I suppose I may get slipped into someone's backpack and live a fulfilling life in a nice girl's dorm room, but that kind of thing doesn't happen to an ordinary spoon like me.

Night

*Robert C. Pfaff*

Night.

A time of dreams  
of what may be  
if all goes right.

A time of closeness  
with the spirits  
that form the soul.

A time of reflection  
of the nights  
gone by.

A time of anticipation  
of the woman  
who hides in the moonlight.

A time of love  
when appearances  
are cast aside.

A time of confusion  
when reality  
diverges from fantasy.

A time of pain  
when you realize  
reality wins.

## Our Enchanted Playground

*Amy Moss*

On a cold, snowy evening  
My friend and I departed on a journey  
Far away to our enchanted playground.

Smooth, crisp snow covered the ground,  
White as far as the eye could see.  
A winter wonderland was our enchanted playground.

We tracked merrily through the snow,  
Breaking the beautiful monotony of  
our enchanted playground.

We tried hard to reach the sky,  
Falling short each time,  
On the magical swings of our enchanted playground.

We raced down and around,  
Thrown hard to the ground  
By the evil curly slide of our enchanted playground.

Swinging our arms back and forth,  
We made beautiful snow angels  
On the ground of our enchanted playground.

We made snowballs and snow falls.  
We ran and laughed through the cold snow  
Of our enchanted playground.

Weary, we retired to the "old people's" swing.  
Where we sat,  
Mystified by the silent magic of our enchanted playground.

Cold, we walked away,  
Looking back to forever embrace in our minds  
Our beautiful enchanted playground.

## Rings

Lisa L. Curley

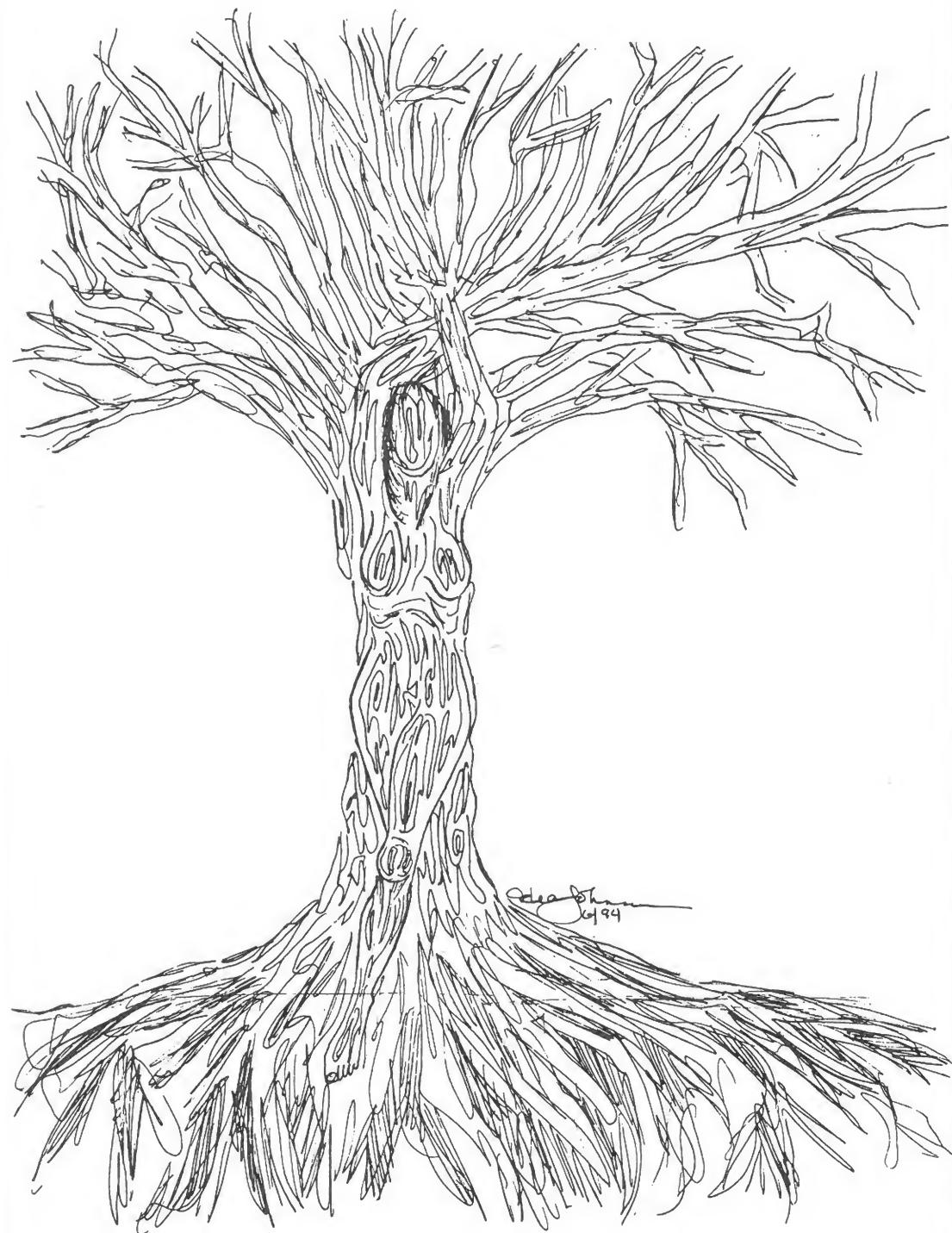
A stately, proud, tree holds hands with the evening sun.  
Roots anchored deep in the clay and lime of Southern Indiana,  
A branch, one among many, majestically brushes the skies.  
Half of only two left growing leaves and bearing the fruit of life.  
A matching Golden Apple stands with dignity at His side.  
The last of Her branches to bloom.

Together, Irish green leaves greet the spring's new life,  
and cool the heat of the summer solstice.  
Then, as bravely as before, they blaze fall's gray skies  
with streaks of a fiery spectrum.  
When stripped of beauty and color in winter,  
patiently, they live for the comfort of spring's sun to bring life  
to their branches once more.

Saplings that they so lovingly weaned,  
Prospered under strong, beautiful branches,  
offering them protection and strength,  
enough for bantling saplings to  
Sprout,

Flourish,  
and Bloom.

The years have added many rings,  
While fresh bark grew strong, and thick,  
The leaves grow, and they fall,  
Though the seasons age their branches,  
Love, has strengthened their Rings,  
As they broaden to share life  
And loving souls, mature and wise  
With all who grave the shade of their leaves.



## Before I Slit My Wrists

*Virginia Evans*

A part of my soul has been ripped from me and tossed aside like loose soil.  
I want so much to run my fingers through your hair and whisper softly,

I love you, I love you, but I cannot.

My love remains, but you are gone.

My heart pains, and you are gone.

The tears flow, my heart slows, my love exists,

But I, no more.

## Cathedral

*Danielle Adams*

Out there,

The trees waited,  
dressed in new white lace,  
looking pure for the visitor.

Morning light,

Creating a bridge from heaven,  
Shyly,

peeked through the haven.

Nests awoke,

while buttress branches enveloped their beauty.

The forest,

A cathedral for the Pagan.

## The Train

by J.W. Sacco

On the north side of Chicago there is a small real estate company that has been there for years. They have just recently hired a young guy out of college named Matt. On Matt's second day there he is scheduled to show a house, he calls upon the eight year veteran Bill to see what he should do; Bill calls him into his office.

"Sit down Matt," Bill rumbles, his gray hair moving slightly as he speaks, "let's talk."

Matt looks around the room, he is nervous, he is new.

"Well ya' gonna' sit down or what?" Bill rumbles even louder. He is starting to lose patience with the rookie.

Matt takes a seat across from Bill, still very nervous, but after the scolding very attentive.

"So kiddo, what house are you showing today?"

"Th...the brownstone on Lincoln," Matt answers nervously.

Bill turns silent, his face as white as a ghost.

"Are you sure?" Bill asks.

Matt reaches into his pocket and pulls out his appointment reminder.

"Here it is sir."

He was right there it was in big black letters.

"1213 North Lincoln Avenue"

"Katerba Family"

"3 p.m."

"I better tell you the story son," Bill said reluctantly.

"What story," Matt replied. He leaned closer to Bill; he seemed very intrigued.

"Well it was ten years ago...."

And so the story began.

"Honey where is my silverware box?", yelled the young woman from the Kitchen.

"I don't know dear," was the answer she got from one of the upstairs bedrooms.

The young man in the bedroom continued to rummage through his box of clothes. This family had just bought the brownstone on Lincoln Ave. and were very involved in unpacking all their boxes.

Suddenly, the house began to shake and a loud roar filled the old brownstone. Doug poked his head out from inside his walk, in closet to look out the back window. A Chicago CTA elevated train flew by on the tracks not more than six feet from the window. Doug Smith rolled his eyes; it was something he was going to have to learn to live with.

"I don't know about this Doug," yelled Bonnie, Doug's wife, from the downstairs kitchen.

Doug just rolled his eyes again, obviously sick of hearing his wife question the buying of this house.

"Honey, don't worry about it...this house is great."

Doug turned back into the closet, suddenly a box fell off the shelf and its contents of spoons and forks fell all over Doug.

"And I found your damned silverware."

The Smith's were tired from the chore of unpacking and were ready to go to bed for the first time in their new house. They spread out a sleeping bag on the floor and were asleep as soon as they hit their makeshift bed. Around three in the morning Doug woke up to a sound in one of the other bedrooms... a scratching sound. He got up and walked down the dimly lighted hallway to where the noise was coming from.

All he could make out in the dark room was the outline of the still full boxes. He walked further into the room when something he saw out of the corner of his eye made him jump back in fright.

A young boy...or at least it appeared to be a boy, was sitting in the corner of the room.

"What the hell are you doing in my house?" Doug growled at the young lad.

There was no answer.

Doug went to grab the little boy but stopped just short of doing so. He was frozen with astonishment... the boy was dressed in what appeared to be 1920's clothes and even though the boy was right there in front of him, Doug could see the wall behind the boy...he was transparent.

"Who... I mean what are you?" Doug whispered.

The boy looked at Doug and began to shake.

"Please sir, take my place," the boy said in a voice that seemed as transparent as his body.

Doug continued to stare at the boy... not understanding what he was saying.

"Take your place??"

The young boy began to jitter nervously.

"Take my place."

The clock in the living room struck 3:15 and the boy jumped up and onto the nearby window.

"Take my place."

Suddenly there was a rumble on the tracks outside. The young ghost jumped onto the tracks and began to run across them. Doug looked out the window but saw no train... Suddenly a train appeared.. an elevated train from the 1920's. The train also seemed to be transparent, but to the young ghost it was real. As he got to the third track the train hit the young ghost. The impact sent the specter flying limp through the air and finally landing on the tracks some twenty feet away. The train disappeared and Doug ran out onto the tracks to the young boy.

The ghost lay there, motionless. Doug tried to pick him up but his hands went right through him.

"Take my place," the ghost said softly, "take my place."

Then he disappeared.

That morning Doug did not dare mention any of this to Bonnie. He waited for her to go to work and then began to investigate some more. He began to walk through the house and found what appeared to be an entrance to the attic. He lowered the ladder and climbed up into the attic.

He poked his head in and saw the transparent boy sitting all alone in the attic.

"Hello," Doug whispered.

The boy jumped up and was obviously startled.

"Help me," the ghost said softly.

"How can I?"

"You must end it, end the cycle. You must take my place."

"I don't understand...tell me," Doug said to the ghost.

"End the cycle, please take my place," was the only reply that the ghost would give. The young specter rose up and walked through the wall; he was gone.

"Take his place," Doug said himself. That night Doug slept in the bedroom where he first saw the ghost. He sat there with his eyes open and was thinking about what the ghost said to him.

"What does he mean... take his place...end the cycle. I don't know....wait... I have to step in front of the train for him. I can save his tormented soul... all I have to do in step in front of the ghost train. It won't hurt me... it'll go right through me and he'll be saved," Doug had the solution and waited for the ghost.

The clock struck three and there was the boy sitting in the corner as he was before.

"I think I understand," Doug told the young ghost.

"You mean you'll take my place?" the ghost asked.

"Yes I want to save you... I can save you."

"Thank you."

Suddenly the house began to rumble; the train was coming. Both Doug and the ghost walked out onto the tracks hand in hand. They walked to the third track and waited. The train continued forward; Doug closed his eyes and tightened his grip around the ghost hand.

The train was no more than ten feet away when Doug opened his eyes and saw that it was no longer a ghost train but a real elevated train.

"Oh God," was all that Doug could get out of his mouth before the train slammed into him.

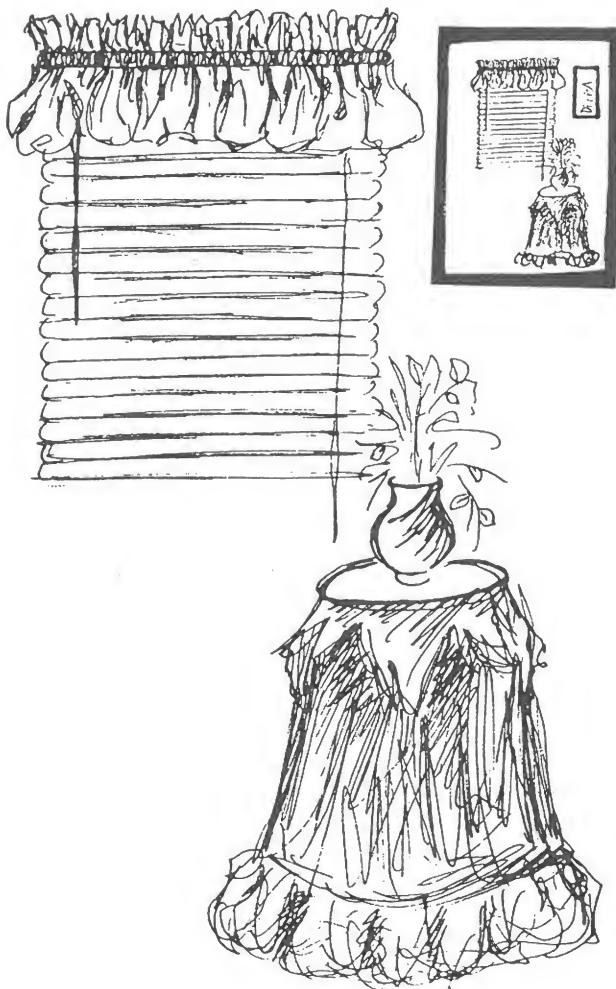
The impact from the speeding train stole the life from Doug. His lifeless body flew through the air and landed about fifty feet from the impact.

The young ghost hovered over to Doug's body, he wiped the blood from Doug's nose.

"Thank you," he said as he began to ascend to peace, "thank you."

Matt sold that house to the family and their first night there the new owner heard a noise from one of the bedrooms. He walked down the poorly lit corridor to the bedroom. He looked around and saw a man sitting in the corner of the room.

"My name is Doug, I need you to take my place," the ghost said to the man. Suddenly there was a rumbling outside on the tracks....



## The Walk Home

*Rachel Barlage*

She held it tightly in her hand  
grasped desperately between her thumb and  
her raw, peeling fingers.  
This week's promise of salvation,  
a white and blue  
Business Reply Card.  
No postage necessary.

Tonight it was the Peace Corps,  
last weekend a community college.  
On other long walks home it had been  
a pottery class,  
a foreign exchange program,  
a religious retreat.

The small wooden desk in her bedroom  
lost beneath a pile of  
square cards.  
White  
speckled with  
yellow,  
lavender,  
green  
unsolicited possibilities.

Bright swirls of color glistened beneath  
harsh white streetlights  
as they slid around on the surface  
of the oily puddles of water  
spotting the sidewalks.

Staring down  
at the rough black pavement  
still shimmering from the rain,  
her sleeves damp from  
dirty dishwater,  
matted hair slick with grease and sweat,  
pressed to her head beneath a  
black hair net,  
she calculated her hours,  
the rent she owed her parents,  
the cost of day care.

The card slipped from  
her fingertips,  
fluttered to the ground.

Through  
telephone wires  
and tree branches,  
she saw faraway stars  
and wished on an airplane.

Sadness Part I:  
Stolen Childhood  
*Anonymous*

A single tear ran down her face  
As he left the room.  
No where to hide, no safe place.  
No one to tell her secret to.

So young and tender, a child's soul;  
Fifteen to be exact.  
A woman's body blossomed full,  
Forced to commit an adult act.

She learns to be brave, hold her head in the air.  
She trains the pain to stop.  
After all, who would listen? Who would care?  
Who would say, "It's not your fault"?



She is...

*Robert C. Pfaff*

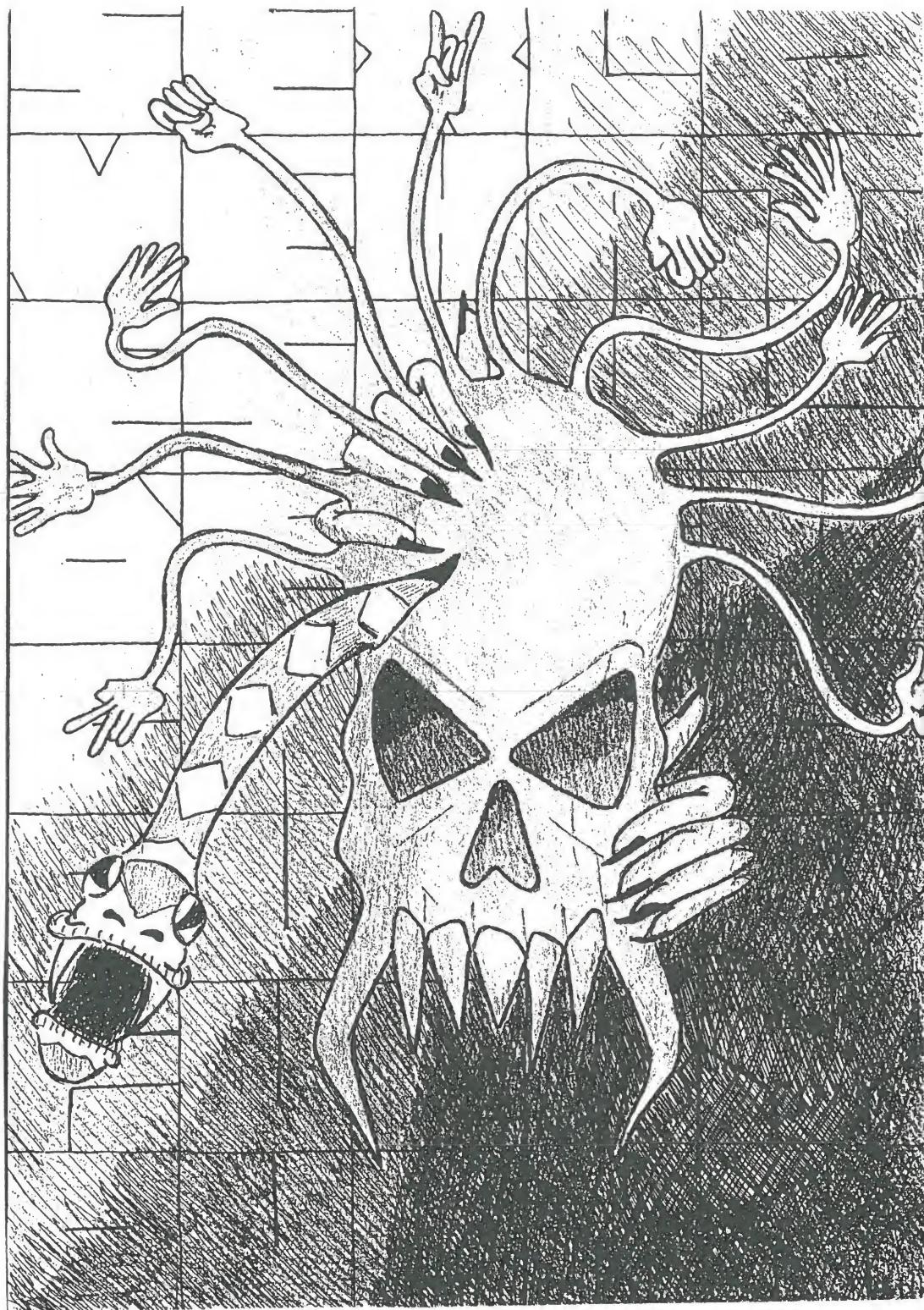
She is a stone  
that warms as the sun allows  
and cools with the snow  
and warms again, even warmer,  
and cracks when the ice comes  
and somehow remains  
just as nature intended.

She is a pond  
that reflects the beauty all around  
only to take the darkness to hide  
what is there  
and to reveal the beauty again at the  
glow of a torch or of the moon  
and still remains  
just as nature intended.

She is a bird  
sunning on a clear day,  
wanting to ride the beams  
yet unsure of what lies  
over the ridge,  
but driven to search for whatever  
is there and unable to accept the  
beauty passed by until the currents  
forbid her return  
and as cruel as it seems.  
this too remains  
just as nature intended.

She is a tree  
rejoicing in the coming of spring,  
sure to be battered by storms  
and sure to spring up stronger,  
shaking in the wind in anticipation  
of what the new season will bring,  
and she grows  
and ages  
and flourishes  
and remains  
just as nature intended.

She is a woman  
afraid of her life yet  
afraid not to live it to its fullest  
and eager to learn  
and grow  
and experience the things held as dreams  
such as beauty  
and trust  
and friendship  
and love  
and this too remains  
just as nature intended.



Here's A Head

*Ryan Wright*

Well I don't have many friends, you see.  
They say I'm strange & sick & queer.  
But that really doesn't bother me.  
I don't hold close friends too dear.  
When I was a little boy.  
I sat in my room alone all day.  
Cause I don't really like the sun too much.  
And I've never been that fond of play.

And while the other kids crashed their Matchbox cars.  
And kicked their stupid cans.  
I just laughed & held them in contempt.  
Cause I had bigger plans.

Here's a head, I think it's dead...  
But I'm not really sure.  
Before you're sick, tell me quick...  
Is it something you'd explore?  
If it breaks, or escapes...  
Don't worry I've got more.  
So here's a head, I think it's dead...  
Take it.  
It's yours.

Well I sneak around, but I'm never caught.  
I watch what all the neighbors do.  
And I'd have to say that I've always thought...  
I'd get on famously with you.  
Why don't you come on over & stay awhile?  
Pay no attention to the smell.  
I really think you'll love my collection.  
I take care of it really well.

Cause while the rest of the fat slobs in this neighborhood...  
Waste their time mowing lawns.  
I just laugh & hold them in contempt.  
Cause they're all just retarded pawns.

Here's a head, I think it's dead...  
But I'm not really sure.  
Before you're sick, tell me quick...  
Is it something you'd explore?  
If it breaks, or escapes...  
Don't worry I've got more.  
So here's a head, I think it's dead...  
Take it.  
It's yours.

The Julia Dream

*Pat Lennon*

I drench myself in this dream  
A dream thousands before had encountered  
Her immaculate mane, her whispered words, her silent walk.

I am forever anchored on her island of diamond eyes  
Her puffed lips like cotton candy surround her sensual smile  
The unveiling of an eyelash wink.

Her desert-toned legs stand vigor like the mighty oak  
Hand-crafted bodily curves of alien mastery  
Sun gleaming and tan-soaked.

At last a tear crawls from my eye  
She slowly takes another arm  
Turns, and waves good-bye.

*Cover by Sharon M. Vairo and Stephen R. James 1991*